

# Zone 8 unites to Say NO to Domestic Violence



All 20 districts throughout Australia, New Zealand and the South West Pacific have joined forces to combat the disturbingly common crisis of domestic and family violence.

**By Amy Fallon**

**IT** was during a funeral five years ago that David Harmon, of the Rotary Club of Ballina-on-Richmond, NSW, began to realise the enormity of domestic and family violence in Australia. The memorial was for a friend's sister, who was tragically murdered in Melbourne in front of her three young children.

"I thought, jeez, this is shocking what's going on. What could I do as the incoming president of our club at the time?" says Dave, the current Governor of District 9640.

"That night I went back to my wife and our club and spoke about making domestic and family violence the main focus of my year as president."

A few months later, 800

people walked down the main street of Ballina, marking the start of the club's campaign to raise awareness of domestic violence. On average, one woman a week is murdered by her current or former partner, according to statistics cited by non-profit Our Watch.

This year, the 20 Rotary districts that make up Zone 8 have united to address



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the plight of gender-based violence. They encompass 16 countries from Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Island Nations, with over 25,000 Rotarians and 20 governors.

“We have clubs across our zone combining for a common cause,” says Dave.

“This is a rare opportunity and has not happened in over 30 years. Imagine the community interest, impact and engagement this combined effort will create.”

The campaign against domestic and family violence has helped transform the Ballina-on-Richmond club. In the past few years, membership has grown from 33 to approximately 80

**LEFT:** Brumby's Bakery in Ballina got behind the 'Rotary says NO to Domestic Violence' campaign.

**BELOW:** Ballina Mayor Sharon Cadwallader (right), who survived the physical and emotional domestic violence of her first marriage, joined the 2022 walk against domestic violence through Ballina with author and comedian Mandy Nolan (second from left), also a survivor of domestic violence, District Governor Dave Harmon and wife Robyn.





**BELOW:** Cherry Street Sports Club has been supporting the 'Rotary Says NO to Domestic Violence' campaign since 2022.

people, spurred on by those wanting to help tackle what is the biggest issue facing police today.

The death of local woman Lindy Lucena in January, just one street back from Ballina's main street, marked Australia's first domestic and family violence related death for 2023. Lindy's partner was charged with her murder and for breaching an

apprehended violence order.

Lindy's death rocked the Ballina community, which turned to Rotary to see how they might make real, grassroots change. Inspired by local business Cherry Street Sports Club, whose 100-strong staff had donned Ballina-on-Richmond's 'Rotary Says NO to Domestic Violence' shirts for a six-week period over Christmas and

New Year, an idea began to take shape.

A \$25,000 grant between the Rotary Club of Ballina-on-Richmond and Cherry Street Sports Club helped launch the 'Purple Friday' campaign, which sees businesses in Ballina all wearing the 'Rotary Says NO to Domestic Violence' tops every Friday for the remainder of 2023. Within two weeks, 90 businesses had ordered more than 1,000 free shirts, funded by Ballina-on-Richmond and the local bowls club. The community enthusiastically got behind the initiative, with everyone from council staff, primary school workers and tradies to hospitality professionals and retail staff sporting purple on Fridays.

Dave says Purple Friday has helped raise awareness of domestic violence and encourages victims to speak up. There are many examples of Ballina women



**RIGHT:** District Governor Dave Harmon, right, with Rotarian Jodie Shelley, who designed the campaign's purple shirts, and Superintendent Scott Tanner, who has been instrumental in forming the partnership between Rotary and NSW Police.







**LEFT:** Members of the Ballina Shire Council have come on board to support the 'Rotary Says NO to Domestic Violence' initiative.

Scott Tanner says the partnership with Rotary is a powerful one.

"We want to show a strong united force with Rotary, standing up and saying no to domestic violence and we want to encourage other regions around the country to do the same. It's time to speak up, stop the silence."

Dave strongly backs Superintendent Tanner's sentiment.

"As leaders in our community, we need to stand up and say 'we've had enough of this. What's happening at the moment isn't working. Things need to change'."

Dave encourages all clubs to get behind the 'Rotary Says NO to Domestic Violence' initiative by visiting [www.rotaryclubofballinaonrichmond.org.au](http://www.rotaryclubofballinaonrichmond.org.au) and ordering shirts.

"They are a great shirt to wear at any of your club's functions and are a fantastic conversation starter around domestic and family violence." **RDU**

having conversations about their lived experiences, which has never happened before.

"On one Friday alone, a hairdresser in town had three women come in and share their stories for the first time in their lives – just by her staff wearing purple."

As part of its broad campaign against gender-based violence, the Rotary Club of Ballina-on-Richmond also supports the Love Bites program. The club helps fund the delivery of this program in high schools on the Northern Rivers. Love Bites covers topics such as power and respect in relationships, sexual assault and consent, warning signs of a controlling relationship, and much more.

"Research confirms that the best way to bring about long-term positive change in this area is to educate our youth on what a respectful relationship is and what it looks like," says Dave.

During this year's International 16 Days of Activism, held from November 25 to December 10, the Rotary Club of Ballina-on-Richmond is asking clubs to unite with their community and organise activities that will help raise awareness of domestic violence. This may be a walk,

vigil, or another activity. They encourage clubs to partner with other organisations that may already be doing something for this event. Dave says his club is proposing a zone-wide day of action on December 1.

With the NSW Police recently coming onboard, forming a formal partnership with the Rotary Districts of NSW, and their Queensland counterparts expected to follow soon, this important Rotary-led campaign will continue to grow.

"NSW Police see this is the game changer," says Dave.

Richmond Police District Commander Superintendent

**BELOW:** Cherry Street Sports Club's 100-strong staff wore the campaign's shirts for a six-week period over Christmas and New Year.

